



Foundations of Public Health

Part III: Factors Related to Human Health

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

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Introduction

An earlier module focused on the contributions of quantitative methods in providing essential evidence regarding the factors associated with poor (or good) health. Classical epidemiology has been extraordinarily important in identifying “risk factors” for diseases like lung cancer and cardiovascular disease. However, while classical epidemiology has continued to focus on such proximate risk factors, there is now growing recognition that there are many social determinants that act more distally but have an important impact on health status, often by influencing the prevalence of proximate risk factors. Why do some subsets of a population have a greater tendency to smoke than others? Why are some subsets of the population more likely to eat diets that put them at greater risk for diabetes or cardiovascular disease? This module will provide a discussion of the importance of social, political, and economic determinants.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, the student will be able to:

- Discuss the association between poverty and poor health and the disparities in prevalence of poverty among racial and ethnic groups in the United States.
- Discuss the particular importance of social determinants of health in infants and children.
- Identify the social determinants of health.